



The E-Newsletter of the Senate Majority Caucus

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State Lawmakers Host Forum on Education

An Ongoing Debate

As the ongoing debate on education continues, lawmakers, educators, and the general public have had a better opportunity than ever before to evaluate the pros and cons of various proposals to reinvent public education in Hawaii. That was the consensus opinion in a wide-ranging educational forum hosted by concerned House and Senate members at Kawanānākoa Middle School on March 22. The forum attracted parents, teachers, and administrators who took the opportunity to review a number of the reform proposals that are being considered at the Legislature this session. Senators Carol Fukunaga (D-11th, Makiki, Pāwā'a) and Suzanne Chun Oakland (D-13th, Kalihi, Nu'uānu) acted as facilitators for the discussion.

Weighted Student Formula

Senator Norman Sakamoto (D-15th, Airport, Waimālu, Salt Lake), chair of the Senate Committee on Education, cited the

Weighted Student Formula as one of the key ideas to come to the fore this year. He was able to study the formula at first hand during a visit to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, earlier in the legislative session.

Roger Takabayashi, president of the Hawaii State Teachers Association, spoke of the Weighted Student Formula as a way



Education Chair Senator Norman Sakamoto (D-15th, Waimālu, Airport, Salt Lake) makes a point during an interactive forum on education at Kawanānākoa Middle School

to focus on the individual needs of students and allocate funds to schools according to those needs.

Milton Shisido, chair of the McKinley complex, said, "When you talk of real reform, you have to focus on the classroom. Then we're on the way to real student achievement." He cautioned against an excessive emphasis on test-taking, which he called "merely a snapshot" of student achievement.

Forming Key Partnerships

Superintendent of Schools Patricia Hamamoto focused on the goal of public education, which she said was to develop "literate, responsible citizens" ready to enter the workplace with the necessary skills. She described the current system as not broken, but rather obsolete – like an older car that still runs but lacks modern-day amenities. She said a key to success for Hawaii's schools would come from forming partnerships with parents, businesses, and local communities.

Senator English Addresses United Nations Seminar



Senator J. Kalani English delivered the opening remarks at the United Nations University Global

Seminar on March 19 at the University of Hawai'i. The Global Seminar series is a program to increase understanding and increase international awareness among the student population and young professionals in the Asia Pacific region. The series began in 1985; this was the first time it was held in the United States. Senator English, whose involvement with the United Nations began in 1991 when he took part in the preparatory committees for the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil the following year. He spoke of the lasting importance of the Rio Summit in his address to the U. N. seminar.

"The Rio Summit's key message was that nothing less than a transformation of our attitudes and behavior would bring about the necessary changes to our world. The event called attention to the environmental impact of both poverty and excessive consumption. In Rio, governments recognized the need to redirect international and national plans and policies to ensure that all economic decisions fully took into account any environmental impact. And the message has produced results, making eco-efficiency a guiding principle for business and governments alike."

Senator J. Kalani English (D-6th, East Maui, Moloka'i, Lana'i, Kaho'olawe) has worked with a number of United Nations organizations since 1991.

Senators Honor the Work of Student Filmmakers at State Capitol



Senator David Ige

Senators Carol Fukunaga (D-11th, Makiki, Pawa'a) and Senator David Ige (D-16th, Pearl City, Aiea) honored award-winning student filmmakers from the First Annual 'Olelo Youth Xchange Video Competition on

the floor of the Senate on Wednesday, March 24th.

Students from Kohala Intermediate School, Chiefess Kamakaha Middle School, Nanakuli High and Intermediate School, and Maui High School will represent the winners of the statewide competition, and winning videos will be screened in the Capitol Auditorium immediately afterward. The student videos include public service announcements, short documentaries, news features and music videos. In this first year of this competition, 'Olelo received over 150 entries from students across the state. The

students were able to choose any issue that affects their lives as a subject for their videos. Senator Fukunaga said, "We're proud to be able to encourage this kind of creative, collaborative effort from young people in our schools." The program was sponsored by 'Olelo Community Television, Waianae High School's Searider Productions, Sony Hawaii, the Ko Olina Resort, and First Hawaiian Bank.



Student filmmakers (from l. to r.) Nick Smith, Liberty Peralta, Chad Brown, Mika Pitolo, and Solomon Alfapada are part of the award-winning Waianae Seariders digital media program.



Big Island Senators Pay Tribute to Their Teacher of the Year

Big Island Senators Lorraine Inouye (D-1st, Hamakua, South Hilo) and Russell Kokobun (D-2nd, S. Hilo, Puna, Ka'u) pose with 2003 Hawaii District Teacher of the Year Merle Okabe in the Senate Chambers. Ms. Okabe is a Social Studies teacher at Kea'au High School who says, "Teaching is not a profession; it is a passion." She is credited with pioneering the integration of language arts and social studies programs at her school through the International Reading Association, the National Council for Social Studies, and several other organizations.

Senator Hooser "Shadowed" by Hometown Visitors



from left to right: Apryle Kahale, Sen. Gary Hooser, and Kristy Kaohelauii

They had to wake up at 4 a.m. to make the trip to Honolulu, but two students from Kula Aupuni Ni'hau A Kahelelani Aloha, the Kekaha charter school known by its initials, KANAKA, say it was worth the early hour. Kristy Kaohelauii, a Junior, and Apryle Kahale, an 8th Grader, had been selected to

represent their school on a day-long visit to the State Capitol at the invitation of Senator Gary L. Hooser (D-7th Senate District), who represents both Ni'hau, where the girls live, and Kauai, where they go to school.

Of special interest to the young ladies was a meeting of the Senate Committee on Economic Development, which was conducting decision making on House Bill 2569, among others. This is a measure, that would prohibit items made of seashells from being labeled "Ni'hau" if not 100 percent made of Ni'hau shells and made within the State. The bill would also allow items made with at least 80 percent Ni'hau shells to be labeled as to percentage content.

Both girls look forward to telling their friends back home about their inspiring visit.



Environmentalist Recognized for Years of Service

Senator Melodie Aduja (D-23rd, Kane'ohe, Kahuku) and Senate President Robert Bunda (D-22nd, North Shore, Wahiawa) share a moment with Dr. Diane Drigot, Senior Natural Resources Management Specialist at Marine Corps Base Hawaii in Kaneohe. Senator Aduja said in a floor speech that "Her service record is exemplary. She and her hard work serve as an inspiration to us all. For more than 21 years, she has worked to improve relations between the military and the community."